



PHIL ANDREWS

Reports to Council District 3

Derwood, Gaithersburg, North Potomac, Rockville, Washington Grove

Libraries and Schools

As a graduate of MCPS, as a parent of a MCPS student, and as a son of a retired County librarian, I understand the importance of excellent public schools and libraries. I also recognize the crucial role of Montgomery College in providing affordable high-quality education.

Since 1999, the County Council has provided funding to have class sizes of no more than 15 students per teacher in all first-and second-grade reading classes. This crucial initiative has helped students get a good start in school.

Although I am delighted with the recently rebuilt Richard Montgomery HS and College Gardens ES, I am disappointed that a shortage of revenues, including \$8.7 million less than expected of state aid for school construction, gave the Council little choice but to delay the much-needed modernization of Gaithersburg HS from 2012 to 2013, as well as four other high school modernizations.

I am very pleased that County Executive Leggett agreed with my request for a significant expansion of Gaithersburg Library. The new plan, fully funded by the County Council, will add a second floor in 2010 to provide adequate space to serve the thousands of residents who use the County's second-busiest library.

To avoid a *de facto* fee for library use, I led the successful fight to retain the policy of free parking for library users at all County libraries, but with a limit of two hours at libraries in areas where parking is normally charged (currently only Rockville and Bethesda).

Dear Neighbor,

People are being squeezed by \$4-a-gallon gas, fast-rising food prices, and the economic slowdown. I will continue to do my best to ensure that the County keeps taxes at reasonable levels, trims non-essential spending, and protects core areas, such as education, public safety, infrastructure, parks and public health.

To help close a projected deficit of \$296 million for FY09, I proposed saving \$46 million by reducing employee cost-of-living increases. Most County, Montgomery College, and MCPS employees are getting pay raises of 8% (the sum of a COLA increase of 4.5 to 5% and a step increase that averages 3.5%). My proposal to reduce the average pay increase to 6% would have enabled the County Council to reduce the property tax increase. However, the unions lobbied against this approach and the Council rejected it.

Since salaries and benefits account for 80% of County-funded operating budgets, reductions in personnel costs are needed to achieve major savings. I opposed recent County labor contracts—including a 28% pay increase for most firefighters over three years, and a 33% increase in the County retirement contribution for general employees—because they dig a deeper fiscal hole for the County at a time when we need to fill the hole. It is not a question of the worth of our valuable employees, but one of affordability and equity. In tough times, everyone needs to help.

It is an honor to represent you and I value hearing from you.

Phil Andrews

If I can be of assistance, please contact me at:

Phone: 240-777-7906

councilmember.andrews@montgomerycountymd.gov

visit: www.montgomerycountymd.gov

Public Safety Update

Fire and Rescue

The County will open its first new fire station in two decades in January 2009 in West Germantown. In the next few years, new fire stations will be located in East Germantown, Clarksburg, and Travilah (on the site of the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA). The Travilah station will improve response times in West Rockville, North Potomac and Gaithersburg. The Council is scrutinizing the Executive's plan to move the PSTA, as well as his proposal for ambulance fees.

The County Executive has proposed ambulance fees of \$300 to \$800 dollars. I oppose ambulance fees.

Ambulance fees would set a bad precedent of charging for emergency services. Insurance companies, not being charities, would raise rates if billed by the County. Regardless of how well implemented, ambulance fees would deter some people from calling 911 when seconds can make a life or death difference. People in distress who drove themselves to a hospital would endanger others. Ambulance fees also could undermine crucial efforts to maintain strong volunteer departments that save taxpayers millions annually.

Police

As chair of the Public Safety Committee, I've worked closely with County Executive Leggett, with my Council colleagues, and with County Police Chief Tom Manager to strengthen MCPD. After adding 89 officers during the past three years to enhance police patrol, special operations and investigations, the MCPD budget approved for FY09 is essentially a same-services budget.

The Council restored funding to keep 12 officers in the Community Services Division who work out of the district stations, and added a second recruit class to keep up with normal attrition.

The County has intensified efforts to keep gang-related crime at a low level, using prevention and intervention strategies, while relying on police for intelligence gathering and suppression.

Speed cameras are working, reducing speeding in school zones and in residential neighborhoods.

Park Police continue to do an excellent job of keeping parks safe, and the County soon will begin construction of a new animal shelter (in Derwood) to replace the unacceptable current facility.

Property Taxes

Skyrocketing increases in residential assessments that occurred from 2003–2006 would have caused a major hardship for many County residents, especially those on fixed incomes, had the Council not provided significant property tax relief over the past four years. Even with this year's property tax bill increase, the property tax bill for a home at the average taxable value will have increased just 12.4% in the last five years, less than inflation. This reflects the Council's goal of reducing reliance on the property tax, which is more regressive than many other taxes.

Since I initiated a resolution in 2004 to reduce the property tax rate, the Council has cut the rate by 10% and approved \$1,529 in credits to homeowners.

Although the Council kept the property tax rate the same and approved a \$579 credit for owner-occupied homes for FY09, homeowners will see an increase in their property tax bills above the inflation rate this year. The County Executive proposed and the Council agreed that maintaining the Charter Limit this year, which keeps increases at the rate of inflation, would have required unacceptable cuts in essential services, given the slowdown in County revenues.

Homeowners with incomes below \$64,000 and with modest assets are eligible for the "circuit breaker" credit, which can result in substantial property tax relief. Eligible homeowners 70 or older can receive an added 25% circuit breaker credit. Call 1-800-944-7403 for details or go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

Councilmember Andrews joins Project CHANGE AmeriCorps Director Judy Lapping in congratulating the AmeriCorps National Service graduates. From 1994–98, Andrews directed the County's AmeriCorps public safety program.



Emergency Preparedness

The break in the WSSC water main in June that led to health advisories in half of the County to boil water, and resulted in the closure of hundreds of restaurants shows the importance of being prepared for an emergency. It also reminds us that the event most likely to trigger an emergency is an infrastructure failure or power outage.

The County must be well-prepared and must respond appropriately and in a timely way regardless of the type of emergency. The failure of County managers to activate Alert Montgomery, the County's emergency notification system via email/phone/PDA, after the WSSC water main break was inexcusable. The County has to deliver what it promises.

The Public Safety Committee, which I chair, promptly met with the County's emergency managers to impress upon them that it is imperative that a fail-safe system be put in place promptly to ensure no delay in activating Alert Montgomery during any future emergency.

Emergency planning and operations have been reorganized. As of July 1, 2008, the office reports directly to the County Executive.

Given the County's location, terrorism remains a major concern. The County's ability to respond optimally requires a prepared, cooperative public. Families need a pre-arranged meeting place if separated and unable to communicate. Contact numbers for doctors should be kept on hand.

To be notified by the County about emergencies via email/phone/PDA, sign up for Alert Montgomery at www.montgomerycountymd.gov. The County's Advanced Practice Center for Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response (part of HHS) recommends nine items to have on hand to be ready to shelter-in-place in an emergency (you may want to clip the panel on the right).



Plan 9: Nine items you need in an emergency to shelter-in-place

1. Bottled Water One gallon a day per person for 3–5 days. Keep the water in a dark cool place and replace it with fresh water every six months.

2. Non-perishable Food 3–5 day supply of food per person, including: ready-to-eat canned meat, fruit and vegetables; boxed or canned juices; powdered milk and soup; crackers, granola, trail mix.

3. Clothes One change of clothes and footwear per person. Pack blankets, rain gear and outerwear in case of cold or inclement weather.

4. Medications Have three days worth of any prescription medicines you're on. Check expiration date.

5. Bright Flashlight A lantern-style light allows hands-free use. Don't use candles; they are a fire hazard. Remember to stock up on batteries.

6. Manual Can Opener Buying items with pull-top openings is a good idea.

7. Battery-powered Radio You'll need this to listen to the news and weather. Have plenty of batteries on hand.

8. Hygiene Items Soap, toilet paper, toothbrushes, etc.

9. First Aid Kit Pre-made kits are available at most pharmacies and grocery stores. Basics include non-prescription medicines, antiseptic, bandages, and gloves.

Traffic Relief, Transportation, and Growth Policy

Traffic Relief and Balanced, Sustainable Growth

Traffic congestion remains one of the most serious problems facing our County. There is no one or easy solution.

It is crucial to spend scarce public funds on cost-effective road, transit, bike-way and pedestrian improvements (such as the dramatic improvements on Great Seneca Hwy. at Muddy Branch Rd. and at Sam Eig Hwy.), on traffic management strategies (such as clearing disabled vehicles faster), and traffic reduction strategies, like carpooling and teleworking.

New development must pay its fair share to offset traffic it creates. In 2007, the Council substantially raised development impact taxes to help fund transportation projects. Transit-oriented development that minimizes car trips should be required, and the Agricultural Reserve must continue to be protected.

To relieve east-west traffic, SHA should widen Muncaster Mill Rd., and MD 28 and MD 198 from Georgia Ave. to U.S. 29 to four lanes, and not build the multi-billion dollar ICC.

I strongly support building the Corridor Cities Transitway, which would connect Clarksburg, Germantown, west Gaithersburg and Rockville to the Shady Grove Metro, and the Purple Line to connect Bethesda, Silver Spring, College Park, and New Carrollton. I proposed the free Ride-On bus service for seniors and people with disabilities, and championed inexpensive Ride-On bus passes. The new \$25 monthly Ride-On pass is a bargain, saving regular riders about 50% in fares.

To improve pedestrian and bicyclist access and safety, the Council approved a bill that I introduced (2007) to require pedestrian and bicyclist impact statements for capital projects. This ensures that systematic attention will be paid to enhancing pedestrian and bicyclist safety, such as adding sidewalks.

The ICC \$7/Day Toll Highway

The Intercounty Connector (ICC), which would connect I-370 near the Shady Grove Metro to U.S. Rt. 1 in Laurel, was sold with the claim that it would “relieve gridlock for the entire region.” It won’t.

The State Highway Administration (SHA) found that the ICC won’t relieve traffic on I-270 or I-95, or on the Beltway in Montgomery County.

SHA plans roundtrip rush-hour tolls of \$7/day, (IV-350, ICC Final Environmental Impact Statement, FEIS), and says it will raise tolls (congestion pricing) to keep the ICC free-flowing. SHA modeling of ICC use found significant sensitivity to high tolls—a 10,000/day vehicle decline for tolls at \$6.10/day versus \$4.68. Higher tolls would drive even more people onto local roads, reducing traffic relief the ICC might otherwise provide.

With planned ICC tolls of \$7 per day, end-to-end commuters would pay more than \$1,500 a year, pricing off many drivers whose taxes helped build the highway.

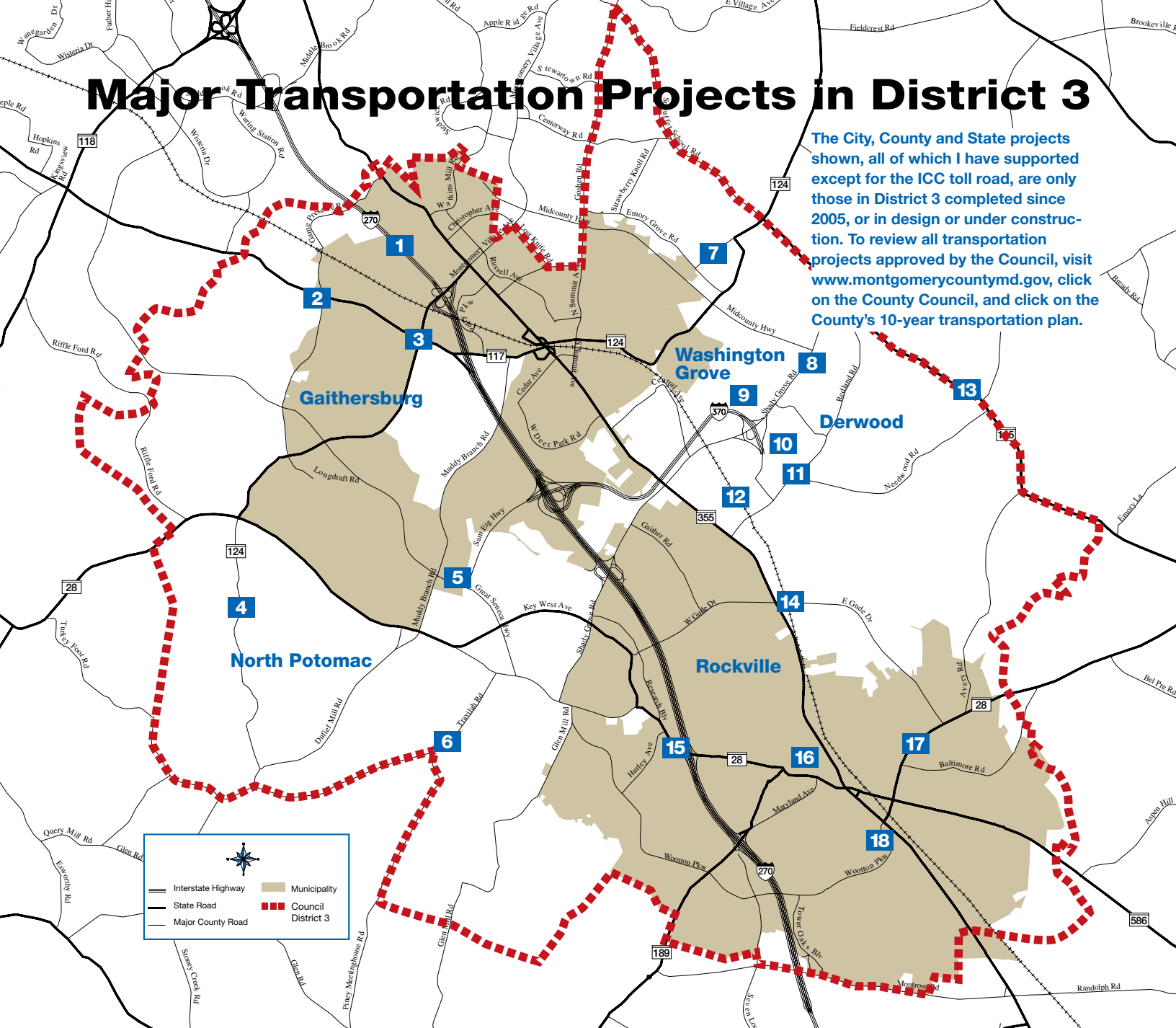
The State has refused to acknowledge that the ICC would undermine initiatives to address global warming. SHA projects that vehicle miles traveled would total more than 500 million more miles annually by 2030 if the ICC is built compared to if it were not (IV-385-386, FEIS), undercutting MD’s Clean Cars Law and Clean Air Act attainment efforts.

The State also has refused to assess the impact that air pollution from trucks and cars on the ICC would have on the health of people closest to the highway, inexcusably using an air quality monitor 1.5 miles from I-95 as its surrogate for assessing the ICC’s impact.

- 1** Watkins Mill Rd. and I-270
Extend Watkins Mill Rd. to I-270 from both directions, and construct interchange with I-270
Status: Watkins Mill Rd. Extended scheduled for completion in 2009. The interchange is in design.
- 2** Clopper Rd. (MD 117) from Quince Orchard Rd. (MD 124) to Seneca Creek State Park
Widen to add capacity
Status: In design
- 3** Clopper Rd. (MD 117) at Quince Orchard Rd. (MD 124) intersection
Rebuilt to improve traffic flow
Status: Completed in 2005
- 4** Quince Orchard Rd. from Darnestown Rd. to south of Horse Ctr Rd.
Multiple spot safety improvements, including a sidewalk/bikeway
Status: Completed July 2008
- 5** Great Seneca Hwy. at Muddy Branch Rd. and Sam Eig Hwy.
Through and turning lanes added to increase capacity at intersections
Status: Completed in 2005
- 6** Travilah Rd. from Darnestown Rd. to Dufief Mill Rd.
Completely re-engineer road for safety; add sidewalk/bike path
Status: Scheduled to be completed by November 2008
- 7** Woodfield Rd. from Midcounty Hwy. to Airpark Dr.
Widen to add capacity
Status: In design
- 8** Shady Grove Rd. between I-370 and Muncaster Mill Rd.
Install three noise walls (the road’s widening was completed in 2004)
Status: To be completed in 2008
- 9** Intercounty Connector from I-370 to US Route 1 in Laurel
New six-lane toll highway
Construction underway; legal appeal pending; scheduled to be completed in 2012

Major Transportation Projects in District 3

The City, County and State projects shown, all of which I have supported except for the ICC toll road, are only those in District 3 completed since 2005, or in design or under construction. To review all transportation projects approved by the Council, visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov, click on the County Council, and click on the County's 10-year transportation plan.



10 Shady Grove Access Bike Path
Improve bicycle access to Metro
Status: To be completed in 2010

11 Redland Rd. from Crabbs
Branch Way to Baederwood Ln.
Improve traffic flow and add
hiker/biker path
Status: To be completed in 2009

12 Corridor Cities Transitway from
Shady Grove Metro to Gaithers-
burg, Germantown, Clarksburg
Construct dedicated transitway
Status: In design

13 Muncaster Mill Rd. from Redland
Rd. to Norbeck Rd.
Safety improvements
Completed in 2006

14 E. Gude Dr. Bridge over railroad
Replace westbound span
of bridge
Status: To be completed in 2010

15 Rockville Trail Bridge along
MD 28 (W. Montgomery Ave.)
over I-270
Improve hiker/biker safety
Status: Completed in 2007

16 Maryland Ave.
Extend to Rockville Town Center
Status: Completed in 2006

17 Rockville Millennium Trail along
Norbeck Rd. east of Veirs Mill Rd.
Improve hiker/biker safety
Status: Completed in 2005

18 Rockville Millennium Trail along
First St. extended and Wootton
Pkwy. between Veirs Mill Rd. and
Edmonston Dr.
Improve hiker/biker safety
Status: Completed in 2006

New and Continuing Initiatives

Smoke-free Restaurants

I led the battle for our County's Smoke-free Restaurant Law, the Region's first, which took effect October 9, 2003. The law has protected thousands of restaurant workers and hundreds of thousands of patrons from dangerous second-hand smoke at no cost to taxpayers. Restaurant sales tax receipts in the County rose 23% from October 2003 to October 2006.

This law paved the way for smoke-free laws in Rockville, Gaithersburg, Washington D.C., Prince George's Co., Howard Co., and statewide in Maryland.

Affordable Housing

The County can have the most impact in this challenging area by targeting funds to keep affordable apartments from being converted to market rate.

The Council took a major step in this direction by approving the Executive's FY09 proposal to increase the Housing Initiative Fund from \$30 million to \$54 million. The Fund leverages millions of additional public and private dollars.

All housing should meet applicable code. If code compliance is a problem in your neighborhood, call 240-777-3785. In Gaithersburg City, call 301-258-6340; in the City of Rockville, call 240-314-8330.

If you rent and need information about your rights, call the County's Landlord-Tenant Office at 240-777-3609.

Property Tax Disclosure Helps Home Buyers Avoid Trouble

Consumers need good information to make informed decisions. Since April 1, 2008, real estate agents/home sellers have had to disclose on open house fliers and the like the estimated property tax bill for the purchaser of the home.

This law was needed because MD's Homestead Credit doesn't apply during the first full tax year of new ownership, often resulting in the new owner owing \$2,000 or more in property taxes than the prior owner. Few buyers know this.

The County has made it easy for real estate agents and people selling their homes to comply with the new law by providing an automatic calculator. Go to www.montgomerycountymd.gov and click on "View estimated property tax" or call 240-777-3636 for assistance.



County Councilmember Phil Andrews shows an ad that contains misleading information about the property tax of a home for sale. Andrews wrote the law requiring real estate agents/home sellers to provide best available property tax estimates to prospective home buyers.

Campaign Finance Reform

Since 2001, I have worked with state legislators and public interest groups to try to pass legislation that would authorize the County to enact campaign finance reforms. In 2008, the House of Delegates approved a bill, 137-0, sponsored by Del. Susan Lee, that would enable the County Council to establish a public financing system for County elections. However, the State Senate held no vote on the bill.

Living Wages

The County has a strong interest in ensuring that people providing services on its behalf are paid above the poverty level, and above a level that often results in high employee turnover and low-quality service. I championed our County's Living Wage Law (2002). It covers service contracts of \$50,000 or more with for-profit companies with at least 10 employees. The living wage is now \$12.40/hour.



Councilmember Phil Andrews

Montgomery County Council
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Inside:
Read about
proposed
ambulance
fees.



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